



Humanist Society of New Mexico



June 2008

www.humanists.net/nm/ fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com

HSNM Summer Picnic June 15th

Summertime is almost here, so let's have a picnic! Please join us on Sunday, June 15th beginning 11am and ending at 2pm for HSNM's annual picnic. This year we will be using the Elena Gallegos Picnic Area in the beautiful Sandia Foothills. How does one get there you ask? Well, Just go North on Tramway Blvd. Turn East on Simms Park Road. Go East to Open Space Park attendant booth. Pay fee. Follow Loop-Road around until your coming back down West. Look for Humanists. If you get lost or confused call Jay Evans on his cell phone - 604-9117. Oh, and bring a dish!

Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, June 7, 2008 10:30am

Political Suasion

Community Room, La Farge Branch of the Santa Fe Public Library, 1730 Llano St.

For more information contact Bill Weihofen
(505) 988- 1343

Grants Humanists

Saturday, June 7, 2008 10:00 to noon

Book Discussion: "The Politics of Jesus"

by Obery M. Hendrick, Jr.

For more information contact Henry Bulger
(505) 287-4465

NMSU, Grants Campus, Room 103

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

Meetings are free and open to the public and run from 10:00 to noon (except where noted)

Saturday, June 14, 2008

Informal Meeting

General Discussion

Refreshments: John Waldrop

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

Saturday, June 21, 2008

Topical Discussion

Free Trade/Fair Trade

Note: No Food or Drink

Meet at Special Collections Library

423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, June 28, 2008

Speaker Meeting

Regional Water Issues

Frank Titus

Refreshments: TBD

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

Sunday, June 1st, 2008

HSNM Book Club

2:00-4:00pm

"Night Lessons"

by Paul H. Deal

Title Wave Books, 1408 Eubank NE

Humanism is an ethical philosophy that derives its principles from science and reason rather than theology. It asserts the worth and dignity of every person, advocates personal liberty tempered by social and environmental responsibility, and promotes democracy, compassion, and justice. It sees human beings as natural organisms, whose values arise from culture and experience, and holds humanity responsible for its own affairs.

WHO SAID...?

"If a woman can do the same work as a man can and do it just as well, she should have the same pay." (answer at end) Several people asked for information on a few of the books used for research in last month's formal

The Humanist Society of New Mexico (HSNM)

A Membership chapter of the American Humanist Association.

The purpose of HSNM is to promote ethical, naturalistic, democratic Humanism among its members and within its community.

Officers

Frederic March: President

Harry Willson: Vice President/Programs

Jerry Wesner: Past President

Ed Root: Treasurer

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Ron Herman: Director of Classes

Jeff Cornelius: Family Co-op

Randall Wall: Newsletter Editor

Janet Johnson: Book Club

Ted Cloak: Community Liaison

Phil Smith: Webmaster

Membership Director: Open

Social Coordinator: Open

Publicity Director: Open

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies AHA/HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$12 annually. Send subscription and membership request to: Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 13675, Albuquerque, NM 87192. Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Randall Wall at Email paragon2012@comcast.net

The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Saturday of each month.

meeting, "Woe to the Women." Here are a few that are good reads and highly recommended:

1. Cult of Power, Sex Discrimination in America and What Can Be Done About It - A fascinating story of Dr. Martha Burk's adventures in the Augusta National controversy over the admission of women, plus an in-depth account of sex discrimination and its ramifications for American democracy. (Hint: Tiger Woods is NOT the hero of this account, but several men are). A stunning rebuttal to the reductionist claim that Augusta was just about golf. Dr. Burk, who now resides in New Mexico, is a contributing editor to "Ms Magazine," former chair of the National Council of Women's Organization (a coalition of major women's organizations), and women's issues advisor to Governor Richardson's presidential campaign.

(Dr. Martha Burk, A Lisa Drew Book/Scribner, Simon and Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 1-800-456-6789, copyright 2005.)

2. Freethinkers, A History of American Secularism, (Susan Jacoby, NY Times best seller. Owl Books, Henry Holt and Co. LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, NY, NY1010, copyright 2004.) Includes the story of feminism in the history of secularism, e.g. influenced by Darwin and the endless oppression of women by religion, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton became agnostic freethinkers. Discusses the 19th century split between religious women's suffrage groups and the more secular group led by Stanton.

3. Woe to the Women, the Bible Tells Me So, Annie Laurie Gaylor, Co-founder Freedom from Religion Foundation, former AHA board member, former director of Humanist Feminists (FFRF, P.O. Box 750, Madison, WI, 53701, 608, 256-8900, www.ffrf.org)

4. Against The Tide, Pro Feminist Men in the United States 1776-1990 Michael Kimmel and Thomas Mosmiller - collection of writings plus introductory historical essays by the authors for each time period. e.g., Thomas Paine, John Dewey, Horace Greely, Frederick Douglas, Walt Whitman, Wm. Sanger, Humanist-of-the-Year Gore Vidal, John Lennon, Jesse

Jackson, Robert Reich. Caveat: Authors do not include the fact that some of its avowedly pro-feminist writers betrayed women's suffrage in order to pass anti-slavery amendments to the Constitution.

(Beacon Press, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA, 02108-2892, copyright 1992)

5. The Woman's Bible, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 1895, any library

Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, influenced by Darwin, became agnostic freethinkers who came to see that religion everywhere had always oppressed women. After publishing this book, outrageous at the time, the women's suffrage group split into two camps, a religiously oriented organization appalled by Stanton, and the Stanton organization.

Answer: Buffalo Bill Cody

Carolyn Jo Glen Kaye

On Leadership

After watching the recent press conference of the Acting President, one is forced to wonder about some things. How did it come to pass that a person who comprehends so little has become "the most powerful man on earth," "commander-in-chief of the largest and most expensive military establishment in the history of the planet," "the decider of what to do about the axis of evil and several dozen thousand nuclear warheads"?

Some oil magnates selected him, thinking he'd be easy to manipulate, which he is, except for the fact that he's such a moron the facade has slipped and more and more of the mindless nation of sheep he's supposed to lead now see how stupid he is. We could have been rid of him by now, if the process had started back when Congress took it off the table. There were plenty of high crimes and misdemeanors on the record.

So, after the recent press conference, concerned citizens are saying, "That isn't what the country needs! We need leadership. We need ideas, new ideas." Well, we're not going to get leadership from this guy, so everyone waits until next January, which is many months away. That's a long time to let problems like a recession and a broken military establishment languish without real attention. And I worry about what I call "Cheney's stunt," although most fellow-citizens do not. They're worrying about other things, like the recession. But he could unilaterally bomb someone, like Iran. He could send the last troops we have across the Iran-Iraq border. Commander-in-chief? I thought he was AWOL. He could bomb Philadelphia, or some other American city, and say someone else did it. He could have any of

us arrested and locked up with no legal recourse; it's in the Patriot Act.

When a reporter at the press conference asked him about Zimbabwe, the blank look from the "decider" was alarming. The only comment he has on the collapsing economy is "tax cut." The mindless nation of sheep need to wake up in order to defend what's left of the safety net, Social Security and Medicare, or the entire nation will look like Zimbabwe.

Mark Twain said in the 1890s, as the United States was taking possession of Hawaii, Cuba, Puerto Rico, The Philippines and other places, "You cannot have an empire abroad and a democratic republic at home." He was right. We do have an empire abroad, but the democratic republic at home is a shambles. Habeas corpus, elections in which the votes are counted, privacy, equality -- all gone. The strange thing is that the imperialists selected such a jerk to be emperor. It may yet turn out to have been a mistake on their part. In my own view the empire itself was the basic mistake. It does seem to be disintegrating, as they all do. Rome, Spain, France, Britain -- they all do collapse and fall apart. This one we get to watch.

We need leadership. "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." "Ask not what your country can do for you..." Can anyone imagine anything like that coming from this tax-cut, torture, war-on-terror non-entity? On the basis of what did Yale and Harvard grant him degrees? He cheapens degrees, and both schools. He's an embarrassment to everyone who is smarter than he is, which is almost everybody.

Harry Willson

Harry writes a Rant of the Month at www.amadorbooks.com come see the Library of Old Rants...

Naomi Wolf's The End of America: A Book Review by Donald Gutierrez

Naomi Wolf's book The End of America begins with these words: "I am writing because we have an emergency" (1). This warning is preceded by a quote from Justice William O. Douglas: "A nightfall does not come all at once., neither does oppression. In both instances, there is a twilight where everything remains seemingly unchanged. And it is in such a twilight that we all must be aware of change in the air--however slight--lest we become unwilling victims of the darkness."

Douglas's warning goes to the heart of Wolf's book which is that a society can be in the process of moving from a democratic to a fascist society (that "twilight") without most people realizing it. Wolf uses parallel examples from Fascist Italy and Germany to show that dictators like Mussolini and Hitler came to absolute power within democratic institutions. She terms this process a "fascist shift." "Both Italian and German fascisms came to power legally and incrementally in functioning democracies; both used legislation, cultural pressure and baseless imprisonment and torture, progressively to consolidate power.... both aggressively used the law to subvert the law" (21).

This process, Wolf asserts, is what is happening in our country right now. Though Brown-shirts are not storming through Greenwich Village beating up NYU student activists or liberal professors, there are signs that America is indeed becoming a closed society. End exhibits this ominous process as ten steps: Invoke an External Threat, Establish Secret Prisons, Develop a Paramilitary Force, Infiltrate Citizen Groups, Arbitrarily Detain and Release Citizens, Target key Individuals, Restrict the Press, Cast Criticism as 'Espionage' and Dissent as 'Treason,' Subvert the Rule of Law. Just eight of these steps turned Thailand into a police state within a few days, and the same process, Wolf warns, is underway here, if more subtly and gradually.

End is a Wake-Up call to make us citizens realize that we reside in Justice Douglas's "twilight" and are moving towards the darkness of fascism. Thus the relative brevity of the book, and the rousing effectiveness of these elaborated ten chilling steps.

It is hard deciding which of these steps are more pernicious, but it would seem that step ten, The End of the Rule of Law, embodies the preceding nine in a terrifying climax as, Wolf states, they interplay and enhance each other in such a way that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, each contributing to, and climaxing in, fascism. Each of Wolf's steps are so suggestive that, for purposes of brevity, I will try only to hit some of the crucial points among them.

Part II

Totalitarian Italy, Germany and Russia justified their existence and their increasing and finally totally illegal power by urging the existence of a dangerous external enemy. To perpetuate the threat, these regimes covertly wanted that enemy sustained. In the case of the Bush administration, its "War-on-Terrorism" fixation is ideal. Having a dangerous external enemy turns internal dissent into treason, making valid criticism ultimately condemnable as treason. Such a fraudulent emergency,

Wolf urges, leads to Hitler's Enabling Act of 1933 and Bush's Signing Statements, both crucial stratagems for circumventing parliamentary/Congressional checks and balances.

More dramatically frightening is Wolf's Establish-Secret-Private-Prisons step. This elicits Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, all the Black Cells stretched around the world. Wolf at this juncture formulates a major insight about the "fascist shift": "A secret prison system without habeas corpus is the cornerstone of every dictatorship" (46). There is not space to pursue that potent insight (Stalin's gulags and Hitler's concentration camps come to mind) except to cite Wolf's idea that Guantanamo ultimately threatens us, especially in view of Bush's National Defense Authorization Act of 2007 which endangers all Americans by putting civil society under martial law, thereby allowing for detentionary treatment of critic "traitors" of the regime. (Ronald Reagan had plans, according to a recent Progressive Populist piece by Ted Rall, to place almost half a million dissidents in concentration camps).

Paramilitary Forces suggest both Mussolini's and Hitler's gaggles of thugs increasingly organized to commit targeted violence against enemies. Wolf connects this parallel with material from Jeremy Seahill's brilliant work on the paramilitary corporation Blackwater, including their disturbing presence and even criminal conduct on New-Orleans streets after Katrina. Wolf might have developed the implication here that Blackwater could evolve into an American S.A. patrolling the streets of American cities and towns, attacking dissident demonstrators and so on.

The supposedly discontinued TIPPS program, whereby mail-carriers and others would report "suspicious" people, is just one of numerous examples in America today of surveillance. One not mentioned in End is the enormous degree of surveillance going on in college campuses today, as well as the far more lethal ordnance carried by campus cops. Wolf's haunting quotation: "Surveillance leads to fear and fear leads to silence" (88) pinpoints a central insight about any police state.

Government spies infiltrate dissident organizations, even including "Veterans for Peace" while Arbitrary Detention and Release (both steps, again, with parallels drawn with totalitarian societies) is observable in the 75,000 Americans on the "No Fly List" (including Wolf). Targeting key individuals is obviously effective through silencing (including torturing) dissident leaders and thus intimidating the general population. Restricting the Press is a crucial process. Wolf cites the attempt to slide PBS to the right thru urging fewer liberal

programs. A more lethal example was the U. S. military threatening to fire on independent journalists (including Americans) if they transmitted stories electronically, as well as forcing them to reveal their political attitude towards the Iraq War. The broadest example of press restriction was the manipulation of the press by the White House to convey lies--to date, 935--to justify the 2003 invasion.

Criticism as espionage and dissent as treason imply an advanced phase of Wolf's "fascist shift," as it could destroy key areas of the Constitution thru several means, such as H.R. 1955 which, if passed by the senate, would virtually indict and thus repress any public expression of "suspicious" ideas or thoughts. Right-wing publicists like Anne Coulter and William Kristol are already viciously attacking liberals as well as media like The New York Times as traitorous, helping to establish a public mind-set consonant with the repressive outlook of the Bush Administration towards dissent.

Part III

All of this climaxes darkly in the Subversion of the Rule of Law. As with Hitler, this process, which Wolf claims, can occur quite quickly, involves a series of increasing demands by a leader for more power, more rights until a tipping point is reached at which a checks-and-balances system collapses and the president/leader becomes the Supreme Leader. One recalls the numerous instances of contempt for and dismissal of Congress and thus of the public exhibited by Bush/Cheney since 2001. Two recently passed laws, the Military Commissions Act of 2006 and the National Defense Authorization Act of 2007 further subvert the institutions designed to promote representative democracy and protect the public from government autocracy. The MCA allows government to declare any American an "Enemy Combatant" at the President's will. In a short final chapter, "The Patriot's Task," Wolf implores all Americans to demand accountability from the government and restore democracy.

Wolf's book would have benefited from an index, as there are a lot of significant names and events one would like quick referral to. More seriously, as Chalmers Johnson has so authoritatively shown in his triad of "Blowback" books, the Pentagon's increasing and extremely expensive militarism involved in maintaining a global imperialism represents a major force in a "fascist shift," a consideration Wolf says virtually nothing about.

Despite those shortcomings, The End of America is a rousing call to activism because, instead of focusing merely on one or two serious violations of our social

contract with Washington, it piles up ten to arrive at a powerful condemnation of dangerous White House malfeasance. If her bold comparisons of the Bush Administration with the solidification of tyranny achieved by Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini might appear excessive to some, it is nevertheless the very disturbing similitude of those comparisons that should make Americans subordinate their daily concerns and begin taking action against a government regime that is taking their freedom and ultimately their country away from them.

Goodbye to Blasphemy in Britain

By Ruth N. Geller

From Humanist Network News, the weekly e-zine of the Institute for Humanist Studies:

www.humaniststudies.org

May 14, 2008

The long standing British blasphemy laws were officially abolished on May 8, 2008. And good riddance to their long, repressive reign—say humanist and free speech advocates.

The blasphemy laws were based on a centuries old notion that "faith" was at the heart of a moral society. To challenge or offend the official faith was akin to threatening the fabric that held British society together.

The laws specifically prohibited "insult to the tenets and beliefs of the Church of England." It did not include Judaism, Islam, or any other religions in its purview.

The amendment to abolish the "common law offenses of blasphemy and blasphemous libel," was part of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act of 2008. The amendment was put forth in Parliament by Dr. Evan Harris, a Liberal Democrat MP, and, in the House of Lords, by Lord Avebury, also a Liberal Democrat.

Hanne Stinson, chief executive of the British Humanist Association (BHA), told the *Humanist Network News*, that although the laws were rarely enforced, the fact that they existed caused self-censorship in speech, film making, literature and other art forms.

The last person to be sent to prison for blasphemy was a man named John William Gott in 1922. He received nine months hard labor for comparing Jesus Christ to a circus clown.

In 1977, a religious conservative brought a private prosecution against the *Gay News* for publishing an erotic poem called "The Love That Dares To Speak Its Name." Written by James Kirkup, the poem is a narration by a Roman centurion who graphically

describes making love to the dead body of Jesus Christ. The poem was banned in 1976 under the blasphemy laws.

The judge said it was "touch and go" whether he would send the publisher to jail; but, in the end, no jail time was served.

On the 25th anniversary of the poem, Stinson and other members of the BHA stood on the steps of the Church of St. Martin in the Field (with the church's permission), and read the poem aloud to protest the blasphemy laws. While police were at the scene, they made no arrests.

In 1989, Nigel Wingrove's short video about the visions of St. Theresa of Avila, "Visions of Ecstasy," was banned for blasphemy. The 18-minute film, which was meant to be viewed on British television, was denied a certificate by the British Board of Film Classification.

The film showed St. Theresa of Avila caressing and kissing Christ and includes shots of her being erotically touched by a female character representing her psyche. Wingrove said his film was inspired by Bernini's sculpture "The Ecstasy of St. Theresa," and by the saint's own writings.

Denial of a certificate prohibited the 18-minute film from being shown or distributed in cinemas or on video cassettes anywhere in Britain.

Stinson said that her group has campaigned for many years against the blasphemy laws.

In support of its overthrow, the BHA gave written submission to the House of Lords' Select Committee and presented oral evidence. In addition, over 1,000 members of the BHA e-mailed their MP's to urge them to support the repeal, said Stinson.

The British Humanist Association has doubled in membership to approximately 8,000 in the past few years, according to Stinson.

Stinson feels that this is partly due to the fact that both non-believers and supporters of free speech have become alarmed by the increased religious tone in public life, replacing what had been a more secular-friendly, or at least neutral, public arena.

In recent years, "religious organizations have been vociferous," said Stinson. "Every organization consults faith-based leaders. It didn't used to be that way."

Most British surveys have found that approximately 40 percent of Britons identify as "non-religious." However, among those who describe themselves as practicing Christians, more are vocal and politically active, said Stinson.

Former prime minister, Tony Blair, was outspoken about his belief in God in a way that Americans are familiar with from some of our own politicians, such as

President George W. Bush and former presidential candidate Mike Huckabee.

While the majority Labour Party is fairly secular, it's disproportionately Christian at the top, said Matt Cherry, executive director of the Institute for Humanist Studies, and a British citizen.

Britain's current prime minister, Gordon Brown, describes himself as a practicing Christian. In contrast, Labour leaders of the 1970s and 1980s, such as Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock, were open about their atheism and agnosticism respectively.

Stinson said that she doesn't think that abolishing the laws themselves will make that much of a difference. She does feel that it will take away the "threat that is hanging over people."

In addition, it will serve to remove the argument made by believers of other religions, that they deserved the same kind of "protection" that was granted to those who were members of the Church of England.



Friendly Philosophers

Monday, June 9, 2008

Open Forum

Bring Your Own Topic for a General Discussion

Monday, June 16, 2008

Universal Health Method

By founder Jae Atchley D.C.

Copper Canyon Restaurant, 5455 Gibson (opposite Lovelace Hospital) in conference dining room. Dinner at 5:30; talk follows.

Atheists/Freethinkers Meetup Group

<http://atheists.meetup.com/75>

Sunday, June 8, 2008, 9am

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard SE

Tuesday, June 17, 2008

Social Meeting at 6:30pm at Mimi's Cafe, 4316 The 25 Way, Near Jefferson and I-25